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ABSTRACT

Training techniques available for school counselors which can be utilized in working with regular classroom teachers, special education teachers, placement committee staffings and in the liaison role currently emerging are described. The materials presented address the following areas of concern: (1) recent trends in special education programming, such as the requirements of Public Law 94-142, which have contributed to a changing counselor role; (2) the challenge of the individualized education program (IEP), which details the unique needs of the handicapped child and is accentuated by the requirement that a group of people develop, implement as well as monitor the program; (3) strategies for effective group problem solving which appear to be the responsibility of the school counselor; and (4) the potential for the counselor's skillfulness in human relations to have a positive effect on a staffing committee's group decision regarding IEP's. The appendices contain the inserts which provide the model and forms for use in developing IEP's. (Author)

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THE COUNSELOR'S ROLE IN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

THE COUNSELOR'S ROLE IN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) DEVELOPMENT

Recent trends in special education programming, such as the requirements of Public Law 94-142, have contributed to a changing counselor role. Counselors are being called upon to coordinate decision making groups which have been mandated in programs for handicapped students. The challenge of the individualized education program (IEP), which details the unique needs of the handicapped child, is accentuated by the requirement that a group of people develop, implement as well as monitor the program. Strategies for effective group problem solving appear to be the responsibility of the school counselor. Therefore, the counselor's skillfulness in human relations can have a positive effect on a staffing committee's group decision regarding IEPs. This paper describes training techniques available for school counselors which can be utilized in working with regular classroom teachers, special education teachers, placement committee staffings and in the liaison role currently emerging.

Public Law 94-142, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act, 1975, has been called the culmination of a "Quiet Revolution" (Abeson and Zettel, 1977). Many people have viewed the enactment of this law as a time for celebration, especially for children who are handicapped. These handicapped children have been victims of discrimination that has often prevented them from receiving an education. However, on the first day of the 1978 school year, it became a violation of Federal Law for any public education agency to deny an appropriate program to any child in need of special education. Public Law 94-142 actually represents the standards that have been laid down over the past 8 years by the courts, legislatures, and other policy making bodies in the United States. Regarding these standards, National Advisory Commission on the Education of the Handicapped said that "in law, and as national policy, education is today recognized as the Handicapped person's right."

It is not the purpose of this paper to detail all the many provisions and requirements of Public Law 94-142.

The special education literature has provided insightful analyses of of the primary aspects of the law. Exceptional Children, the journal of the Council for Exceptional Children, has published a series of articles, each devoted to an examination of a different aspect of Public Law 94-142.

However, the concern of this paper is focus those aspects of the law which involve people, including school counselors, in decision-making groups.

The decisions which come out of these groups lay the basis for designing an appropriate program of education for each and

every handicapped child. There are two major provisions of 94-142 that concern us most. First is a principle, referred to in the law as "least restrictive environment." Briefly, this principle states that "to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children are educated with children who aren't handicapped. Also, special classes or schooling, or the removal of the handicapped child from the regular classroom environment occurs only when the nature of severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes can't be achieved." Therefore, "mainstreaming" practices are no longer just educational innovations but are promoted by 94-142's principle of the "least restrictive environment." This assures us that more handicapped children will be placed in the regular classes of the schools in which many of us work. School personnel, including counselors, must prepare to meet this challenge.

The second major provision of 94-142 which we will be addressing mandates group decision-making. Congress included as a major component of this law the requirement that each child be provided with a written individualized education program, the IEP. This IEP details the specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of the handicapped child. Merely writing the IEP is a challenge in itself. But the challenge is accentuated by the requirement that a group of people develop, implement, and monitor the program. Now, the educational responsibility is not just placed upon a single teacher, confined

to the four-walls of a self-contained special class, teaching his/her "special students." Instead, the decision-making group will share the responsibility.

INSERT 1

Let's take a look at an IEP. This one is typical and includes the major requirements of the law. According to Public Law 94-142, the IEP must include the following:

(1) a statement of present performance levels

(2) a statement of annual goals and short-term objectives

(3) the special education services to be provided and the percentage of time that the child will participate in the regular education programs (least restrictive environment concept)

(4) the dates the services will begin and end, and evaluation methods to be used to determine the child's progress.

Now that we have the major elements of the IEP, let's look at who's required to participate:

(1) child's teacher(s): regular and special classroom teachers

(2) one or both parents

(3) the child, when appropriate

(4) a representative of the local educational agency (LEA) often principals, but more frequently the guidance counselor.

These individuals, and others, form the decision-making group. The following diagram illustrates the intermediary position of counselors. Also, it shows the liaison role currently emerging.

INSERT 2

In view of their unique positions, counselors are being called upon to coordinate groups charged with IEP development. Counselor's have many skills which can be used to achieve the group's purposes. Of major importance is the counselor's skillfulness in human relations. Counselors can use this skill to enhance the communication of those in the group. As a group facilitator, the counselor can encourage each member to use his/her particular resources in arriving at the "best" decisions for the child's education.

This brings us to the specific purpose of this paper.There are techniques available to the counselor that promote effective group problem solving. The technique which we will present should help group to function more effectively and to give some training to others in group decision making.

The basic technique for promoting better decisions in staffing exceptional studerts as well as preparing IEPs is a set of oral and written instructions. From research in social psychology, the accuracy of the group's decision is improved through training in group decision-making techniques. Now is the time to use this training in the education setting. General instructions in group decision-making can readily be used with staffing groups in developing IEPs. It is therefore

the responsibility of the counselor to impart some general rules and instructions for arriving at better decisions during staffings of exceptional students.

The following five rules (NeMiroff and King, 1975) will contribute to the most adequate decisions and should be considered by groups who are instructed in the group process:

(1) employ democratic or "participate" leadership while working in groups

(2) use flexible patterns of communication in order to increase interaction among group members

(3) use a cooperative problem-solving approach in discussions rather than a competitive win-lose approach

(4) deal openly and candidly with one another and encourage others in your group to do likewise

(5) share responsibilities rather than having a portion of the members take all responsibilities.

INSERT 3

It would appear as if it is the responsibility of the counselor to share and discuss with decision making groups the "Group Decision Making Instructions. In conclusion, the role of the counselor cannot be underestimated, especially if Public Law 94-142 is going to be more than just another "hollow promise."

REFERENCES

Abeson, A., and J. Zettel. The end of the quiet revolution: The education for all handicapped children act of 1975. Exceptional Children, 1977,44, 114-128.

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NeMiroff, P. and C. King. Group decision making performance as influenced by consensus and self-orientation. Human Relations, 1975,28, 1-21.

Public Law 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act, November 29, 1975.

INSERT 1 pp. 1-7

Functions of the Placement Committee in Special Education
(National Association of State Directors of Special Education)

NAME _____

DUE PROCESS CHECKLIST FOR IEP

	DATE
1. Parent notification of Individual Education Program Conference (IEP 1)	_____
2. Individual Education Program team develops program	_____
3. Parent agrees to Individual Education Program (IEP 2)	
a) signed form returned	_____
b) no response from parent in 10 days	_____
4. Parent disagrees to Individual Education Program	
a) parent invited to school conference	_____
b) conciliation conference	_____

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INSERT 1 pp. 1-7

Functions of the Placement Committee in Special Education
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b) conciliation conference	_____

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PARENT NOTIFICATION OF INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM PLANNING CONFERENCE

To: Parent(s) of _____

From: _____, Chairperson
Name

_____
Name of School

Date: _____

We will be developing an individual educational program plan for your son/daughter based on the assessment recently completed. Your participation in this planning process is very important. The conference is scheduled for:

_____ _____
Date and Time Place

If you have further questions, please call me at

_____ _____
Telephone Number Name

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INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

NAME	POSITION
NAME	POSITION
NAME	POSITION
NAME	POSITION

I have participated in the development of the individual program plan for _____ and hereby give my permission for its implementation.

DATE	PARENT

I did not participate in the development of the individual program plan, but give my permission for its implementation.

DATE	PARENT

If we do not hear from you within 10 days, we will proceed with the program as planned.

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IEP 4

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Child's Name _____

School _____

Date of Program Entry _____

Prioritized Long-Term Goals:

_____

_____

_____

SUMMARY OF
PRESENT LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Short-Term Objectives	Specific Educational and/or Support Services	Person(s) Responsible	Percent of Time	Beginning & Ending Date	Review Date

Percent of Time in Regular Classroom

Placement Recommendations (If not in school normally assigned, must justify)

LRE Placement will/will not produce harmful effect on child or reduce the quality of services

Committee Members Present

_____

_____

_____

Dates of Meetings

_____

_____

Committee Recommendations for Specific Procedures/Techniques, Materials, Etc. (Include information about learning style)

Objective Evaluation Criteria for Each Annual Goal Statement

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE _____

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INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

hild's Name _____ Date Referred to Committee _____

chool _____

UMMARY OF PRESENT LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

RIORITIZED LONG-TERM GOALS

Child's Name _____

School _____

IEP 6

Special Education and Related Services _____

Person Responsible _____

Short-Term Objectives	Materials	Beginning and Ending Dates	Review Date	Evaluatio

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Child's Name _____

School _____ IEP 7

PLACEMENT DECISIONS

PERCENT OF TIME IN REGULAR CLASSROOM

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC PROCEDURES/TECHNIQUES, MATERIALS, INFORMATION ABOUT LEARNING STYLE, ETC.

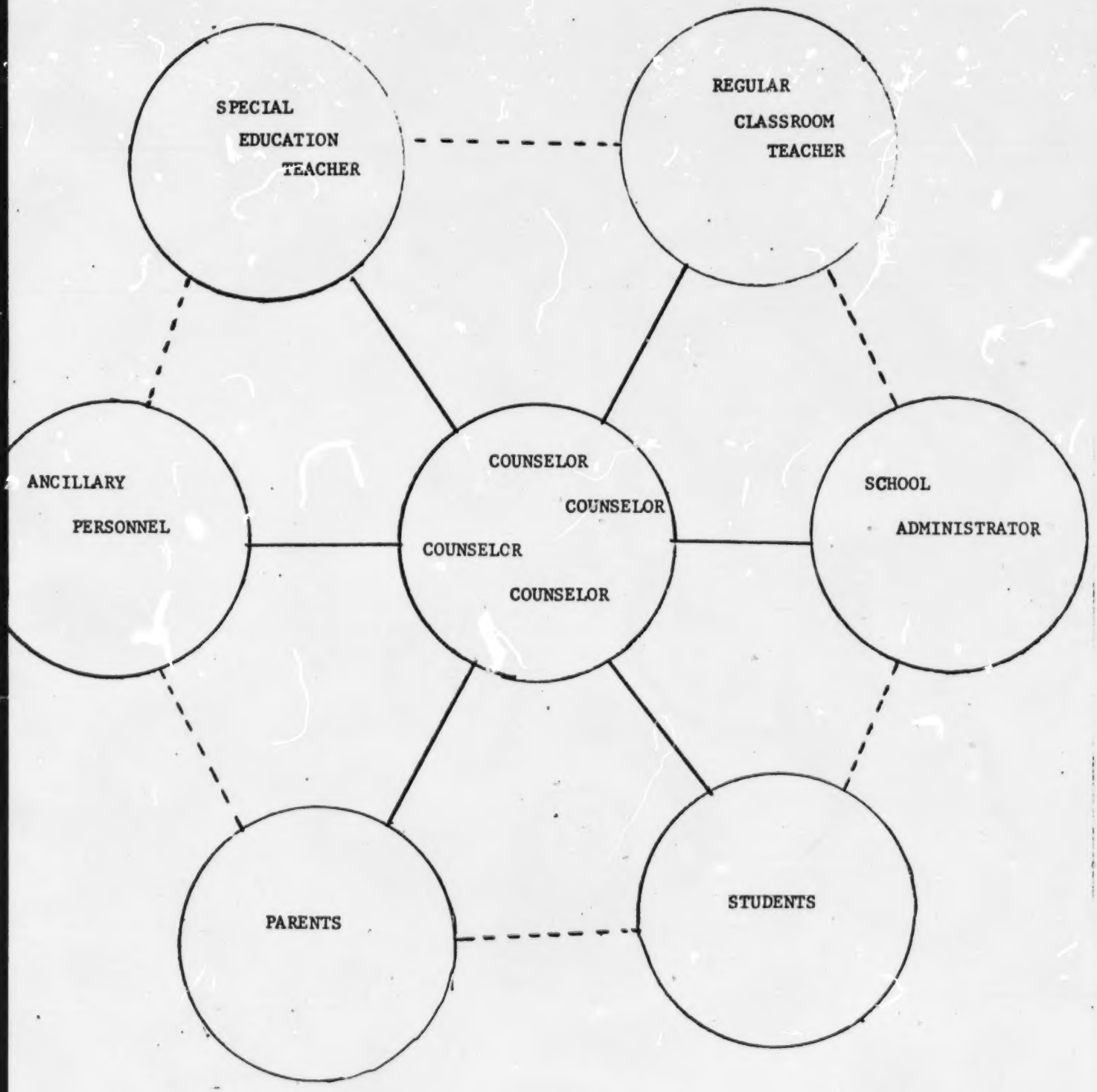
CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF ANNUAL GOALS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

DATES OF MEETINGS

INSERT 2

LIAISON ROLE OF THE COUNSELOR



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GROUP DECISION MAKING

INSTRUCTIONS

On the 17th September, 1787 Ben Franklin addressed the Constitutional Convention concerning group decision making. He stated,

> "Mr. President, I confess there are several parts of this Constitution which I do not at present approve, but I am not sure that I shall never approve of them: For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better information to change opinions even on important subjects. It is therefore that the older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment, and to pay more respect to the judgments of others....I cannot help expressing a wish that every member of the Convention who may still have objections to it, would with me, doubt a little of his own infallibility and put his name to this instrument."

Directions:

ADEQUATE DECISION MAKING: getting superior group decisions!!!

Be concerned with the following helpful guide for group decisions:

I. AVOID arguing to win at your own individual judgments. Use LOGIC to attain the best collective judgment of the group as a whole.

II. Conflict about ideas, solutions and predictions should be viewed as helpful for achieving consensus. Do NOT change your mind to simply avoid conflict. Work toward FLEXIBILITY!!!

III. Consider and listen to all points of view. The greater the input of all group members, the more abundant resources will be available to the group.

IV. AVOID "conflict reducing" techniques such as averaging, trading, majority vote, bargaining, tossing a coin. Do NOT "smooth over" prematurely "conflict reducing" situations. View differences of opinion as helpful.

V. Be on the guard if initial agreement seems to occur too rapidly. More accurate group decisions flow from a fusion of information, logic, and emotion.

VI. Think POSITIVELY, POSITIVELY, POSITIVELY!!! Support and believe the notion that YOUR group can excel at group problem solving.